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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1919
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4542
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2352
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2217
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 2790
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 3101
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001542

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: BERDIMUHAMEDOV VISIT TO GERMANY
EMPHASIZES BUSINESS INTERESTS

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) President Berdimuhamedov led a large delegation to Germany on November 13 for a three-day visit. According to German Deputy Chief of Mission Silke Hahn, it was not an official, state visit for Berdimuhamedov, because the German government has not been impressed with human rights developments in Turkmenistan since the president came into office in February 2007. She opined that the Turkmen leader loves Germany, but his primary goal may have been to gain some political clout in Europe, something that has been developing only on a modest basis. Still, she said, because of the EU's long-term energy needs, her government wanted to keep the door open, and consented to some brief meetings. The Turkmen leader's delegation numbered 140, but as many as 90 were Turkmen dancers and musicians. (NOTE: The German ambassador separately told us that the delegation also included four cooks. END NOTE.)

13. (SBU) Siemens, the consulting firm Goetz Partner, and other major German corporate partners organized the visit and hosted the delegation, she said. Although Berdimuhamedov was able to meet briefly with Chancellor Angela Merkel, President Horst Koehler, and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, substantive discussions were very limited. Hahn said the German government representatives underscored their readiness to increase cooperation with Turkmenistan on higher education, journalism training, and human rights, but the Turkmen side was unresponsive.

14. (SBU) The majority of his meetings in Germany were focused on the business relationship. Hahn said that at the Turkmen-German Economic Forum, hosted by Minister of Economics and Technologies Michael Glos, Berdimuhamedov read a speech in German, even though he does not speak German. One of the business development proposals the president made to the businessmen was to establish a German educational center in Ashgabat to train computer operators. Hahn said this idea is unlikely to draw significant support, since the German embassy here routinely experiences problems working with the MFA to get approved Turkmen candidates into existent educational programs in Germany.

¶5. (SBU) Hahn said the most vibrant part of the bilateral relationship is in the sphere of business. German companies already doing business here want to expand it, and other companies want to start a relationship with Turkmenistan. Berdimuhamedov met with the Chairman of an Eastern-oriented German business council, Klaus Mangold, where the two talked about expanding the business partnership in the spheres of energy, healthcare, high-tech, and others. Hahn said President Berdimuhamedov also may have met with medical professionals Claus Parhoffer and Arthur Muller at the Gross Harden Clinic at Ludwig-Maximilian University. The Turkmen government has had a relationship with the clinic since the mid-1990s, she said.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: German businesses are well situated to expand their business activity in Turkmenistan, since they have been here for so long and have maintained good relations with the leadership. Germany is unlikely to be a advocate on behalf of Turkmenistan to the EU before that country can demonstrate some progress on human rights. END COMMENT.
MILES